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# SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

**Articles which appeared in the National Press while issues of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION for February 22nd, and March 1st, 1947, were suspended owing to the Fuel Crisis**

## INTRODUCTION

### AFTER SIX MONTHS

THESE articles, representing the views of THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION six months ago during the fuel crisis, were published in strange conditions. On Saturday, February 8th, 1947, the Ministry of Fuel and Power, in announcing the cuts in electricity, decided that the periodical press was not an essential industry. By agreement with the P.P.A. (the trade association which includes the great majority of periodicals), we were suspended for a fortnight. The P.P.A. argued that either all or no periodicals should appear, and even issued a statement banning hand-cyclostyled editions which could be produced without the use of electricity.

This ban included hundreds of periodicals of all kinds, including technical and trade papers, illustrated magazines, aids to betting, and pornography. In spite of powerful appeals in the House of Commons and in *The Times*, the proposal to discriminate on behalf of that small group of journalist opinion whose function it is to provide serious news and comment on current events was rejected, even though these papers would have been willing to appear in greatly reduced form and without advertisements.

THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION had already made preparation for the publication of a cyclo-styled edition but abandoned the idea of defying the ban when it received generous offers of publication from daily and Sunday newspapers. We were offered hospitality by the *News Chronicle* and *Daily Telegraph* (whose offer we had to refuse because we could not appear in two dailies simultaneously), and in the *Evening Standard*, the *Observer* and the *Sunday Pictorial*. At the same time the B.B.C., also appreciating better than the Government or the P.P.A. the popular demand for independent comment, asked the Editors of five weekly journals to broadcast their views. Thus for a period of a fortnight the ban had the effect of introducing THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION to a new public amounting (if we exclude the B.B.C. listeners) to more than six millions.

Re-reading these articles, written in shorter paragraphs and in perhaps rather more popular style than is customary in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, I am not ashamed of their comments. After six months they are in fact remarkably prophetic. It will be seen that we urged that the fuel crisis would be of value if it brought home to the public the inevitable dollar crisis. The features of the crisis were correctly diagnosed and the inevitable remedies foreseen. We pointed out that Britain must be prepared to stand "if necessary alone"; that we were an island which could be beleaguered as effectively by a shortage of dollars as by weather or submarines; we hoped that the fuel crisis marked the end of the "phoney peace,"—a phrase which has since passed into currency—and we pointed to the inconsistency of those who had criticised such a mild measure of austerity as bread rationing and yet attacked the Government for the improvidence which, through failure to ration coal at the cost of unemployment and loss of exports, had led to the insufficient accumulation of fuel stocks. We asked "how many will remember after the crisis is over that their real complaint is that they have been given too many electric stoves, too many comfortable trains, and too many luxuries of all kinds? It will be interesting to see when the weather improves how far the present grousing is really reaction from discomfort and how far—for that is the only alternative—it is really a demand for greater austerity."

None of this needed any special gift of prophecy. Others uttered similar warnings, and appealed for preventive action both to the public and the Government. We urged that the Government must re-organise its technique both in planning and publicity. We foresaw "a series of break-downs" until we had set up an alternative for the Ministry of Production, which had been rashly abandoned by the Caretaker Government, and urged that if the Government was to carry out the necessary and positive proposals as well as the enforced economies, it would need an entirely different approach to the public, which would accept both austerity and direction, provided the reasons for it were shown. Events have justified us. Possibilities of increase in the labour force by the introduction of foreign labour have proved as limited as we expected, and the necessity for greatly reducing our overseas commitments and far quicker demobilisation of the Services is now apparent to everyone, even though the Government is slow to carry it out. I am certain we were right in urging that of all our expenditure none has proved so financially and morally unremunerative as the hundred millions a year we are spending in Palestine. It is still true that we have not, as a nation, made up our minds how far we are a satellite of the United States, part of the European Continent, merely a member of the British Commonwealth, or an island trying to stand by itself. Clearly, we are none of these things and to some extent all of them. In August it is even more obvious than it was in February that our planning department has not decided what kind of England we are trying to build. We wish to be an independent but closely integrated part of Europe. The longer we hesitate, the more serious our crisis grows, and the greater the danger that we shall find ourselves once again a beleaguered island fighting a lonely battle.

ED. *N.S. & N.*

August, 1947

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## IF NECESSARY, ALONE

(*Evening Standard*, February 18th, 1947)

THIS is not Dunkirk; our backs are not yet to the wall. This is merely the end of the phoney war.

We have been jerked into realising that the second Battle of Britain is not far ahead.

Somewhere in the back of our minds, while politicians made uninspiring speeches about a "grave and difficult situation," we have all, including the politicians, relied on a Maginot Line somewhere, an illusion that this island could not really suffer the catastrophes of the Continent. Perhaps a hangover from the days of Britain's world supremacy. Certainly a hangover from the war, when any urgent need was always met by lend-lease. The American loan perpetuated this illusion.

This phoney period is over and it must not return when the weather breaks.

At the moment this is a transport crisis because frost and snow and ice and fog and gales have stopped the coal at the pithead from being moved by rail and sea. But the crisis is, as we all know, a coal crisis.

If there is not more coal we shall have less for the factories and less exports to buy the raw materials and food we need. Unless we have made provision, unless we are ready when the loan comes to an end—many experts think in less than two years—we shall learn not merely what it is to be cold but to be hungry.

If we have no dollars to buy raw materials and food, there will be no remedy, only hunger and unemployment. We had not planned to be alone. But this is what we once again have to face.

In 1940 we needed aircraft to meet the danger. This time we need more production and, above all, more coal, which to-day is worth more than gold.

This means, putting it bluntly, that coal miners are now the most important people in the country and therefore, like other workers for whose talents there is a special demand, able to claim a specially favoured position in the community. We need not grudge it.

Because England is an island built on coal there

has, until now, always been plenty of it and the miner has been underpaid and ill-treated. After long years of rotting in idleness between the two wars, miners are naturally a little slow to understand that they need not again fear unemployment.

At last their demand for nationalisation has been granted. At last we have a Government which pays attention to them. They have responded by a substantial increase of production.

But they are a dwindling and ageing population. In return for better conditions and better pay—and miners will now have to be paid more than engineers, however much the rest of the industrial hierarchy dislikes upsetting its wage precedents—the miners may fairly be asked to agree to a substantial influx of foreign workers.

Coal comes first, but it is not the whole story. Economic "planning" means, first and foremost, the choice of priorities. Here the Government are open to criticism because they have not clearly explained to the public that a series of most uncomfortable choices has to be made.

It suits politicians of all parties to talk as if the alternatives were Utopia and bankruptcy. The truth is that if we are not to starve we have to do a lot of things that are very disagreeable.

We have been given an export target, and we have been humoured by having more goods in the shops. There were even, if I recall rightly, some people in quite responsible positions who complained of bread rationing. These very people now abuse Mr. Shinwell for not rationing fuel.

Fuel cuts would have meant short time in industry and either less consumers' goods or less exports.

In particular, a stickler for priorities would have refused to give us an almost peace-time railway service again; and, we presume, those who complained of bread rationing, and now revile the Government for not rationing fuel, would have made no complaints when the slow war-time train took half an hour longer to bring them to the office.

Again, it was bad planning on the Government's part to allow the shop-windows to be full of attractive electric stoves; bad planning to allow us to be warm in our bedrooms at night. If Mr. Shinwell now apologises for his error in permitting us to use more electricity than we could afford or had facilities to make, his critics, we hope, will not complain if the Government is more austere in future.

In a word, the criticism of the Government now is not that it has been too austere, but that it has been too kindly, too generous—a spendthrift, if you will. The Battle of Britain demands that the public tell Sir Stafford Cripps bluntly that we can no longer afford extravagances. A little more austerity, please, Sir Stafford!

Perhaps it is now clear why those who most revile the Government are not, when it comes to the test, at all likely to want to overthrow it. Any Government in post-war Britain, Socialist, Conservative or Communist, would be forced to control, plan and direct. The one impossibility is to put into practice the Conservative election cry of "no controls." That would leave us utterly helpless.

A second reason why Conservatives do not in their hearts want to get rid of this Government, however much they revile it, is that under any other than a working-class administration we should have had prolonged and fatal industrial disputes. The response among the workers to the Government's appeals last week-end was really remarkable.

I hope the Government will draw the moral. It must never again fall into the trick of warning us that things are bad and then explaining away its own warning with soft assurances.

This country needs charts of production at street corners. It needs to be as excited about a graph showing increased output and record economies as it now gets about football pools.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

## WHAT LABOUR EXPECTS

(*News Chronicle*, February 20th, 1947)

THE end of generalised paralysis is now in sight. Its immediate cause—the freeze-up of transport—has been overcome by giving coal belatedly an absolute priority on the railways. Where do we go from here? What courses of action does the public expect of the Government?

One outstanding fact has been the temper of the organised Labour Movement. The "floating vote" has, no doubt, been carried away on a wave of disgruntlement. Not so the trade unionist.

Unemployment and discomfort have not turned him against the men he voted into power in 1945; still less does he repent of the mandate which he then gave for Socialism. In the pits, docks and railways, and outside idle factories, workers have been roused by the crisis to a new sense of urgency.

Something, they feel, will now be done because it must be done. If the dollar loan enabled us to live for a time in a fools' paradise, the remedy is not to go cap in hand to the United States for more financial assistance—least of all at the cost of trimming our own political sails. Rather let us stand on our own Socialist feet.

Such, to-day, is the mood of the Labour Movement. For the Government it should be an encouragment and a spur. The crisis has taught their supporters that the situation demands not less Socialist planning but more. Has the Government learnt the lesson?

It would be fatal if Cabinet hesitations resulted in the present spirit being damped by disappointments and frustrations. Yet that will happen unless uncompromising decisions are taken and—equally important—are fully explained to the workers, without whose whole-hearted co-operation the situation cannot be saved.

The arithmetic is simple enough. We shall end this winter with three million tons of coal in stock. Safety next winter cannot be assured unless we pile up during the summer at least twelve million tons of additional stocks—a seasonal accumulation thrice that of the summer of 1946.

At the same time, if shortage of imports of raw materials and food is not to lead to unemployment and hunger, we must get our balance of foreign payments into shape within the next twelve or eighteen months. After that, exhaustion of the dollar loan will be in sight.

Non-essential imports can and must be pruned. American tobacco and films, as well as petrol, are obvious examples. Less obvious, but equally important, are our huge imports of "foreign troubles." Every soldier maintained overseas is, from the point of view of our balance of foreign payments, an "invisible" import which must be paid for by increased exports.

The fuel crisis has already made nonsense of the White Paper on Defence. We cannot afford, in terms of man-power or dollars, a Service Budget of £900 millions or Armed Forces 1,100,000 strong.

What of production and exports? We have to choose between indiscriminate application of fuel economy and the concentration of our limited resources on industries vital for domestic reconstruction and export.

The first choice would have the deadly consequence of slowing down the whole tempo of national production, with disastrous reactions both on our export deliveries and our competitive costs.

We have no doubt that the decision should be taken in favour of concentration, and that the Government can count on its supporters endorsing such a decision, however great the sectional hardships it may cause.

But if, as we believe, this price must be paid, in order to maintain the economic and political independence of this country, and to enable Socialist reconstruction to be carried to its full and ultimately rewarding conclusion, then the working class must be taken fully into their leaders' confidence.

It is not a question only of occasional radio appeals by Mr. Attlee or other Ministers. The data, the alternatives, the targets and the resources must all be popularised by every publicity device at the Government's disposal.

The present situation, no less than the conditions of war, calls for the appointment of a single Minister responsible for Information; and the medium through which he should work should be not merely a secretariat centred in Whitehall, but regional offices whose job it would be to make the second Battle for Britain news in every factory and home.

Campaigns are won by armies who feel they have something worth fighting for and who understand their generals' plans.

## INQUEST ON MUDDLE

(*News Chronicle*, February 20th, 1947)

THE first three years of the war accustomed us to inquests on military defeats. These inquests should have taught us that the attempt to allot guilt among individuals is less profitable than the analysis of causes.

We can now see that nearly all our early defeats in battle were unavoidable. They were not primarily due to faulty generalship, but to the fact that the organisation for victory had not been done.

This analogy is relevant to-day. To distribute guilt for the fuel breakdown among Ministers is a Tory parlour game. We shall not avoid similar defeats in the next two years by demanding heads on a platter. We shall have a series of breakdowns until we have worked out the administrative machinery necessary for winning the economic battle; and an inquest is only useful if it helps us to improve that machinery.

That industry has had to close down in such a sensational way is due to a most unusual combination of factors.

Whatever the weather, we should probably have had a partial paralysis of industry in the period between the end of January and the end of March, when fuel consumption always exceeds fuel production. But if only three or four of the factors—instead of all of them—had coincided, and the weather had been kinder, we might have squeezed through without a crisis.

The blizzard acted like a novel tactic employed by an enemy general. It exposed all the weaknesses of organisation which might have otherwise gone undetected for years. Hence its value—if we act on its lessons.

Wise after the event, we can all see the obvious mistakes: the decision to increase the train services last September, the unrationed production and sale of electric appliances, the under-estimate of fuel consumption in a period of full employment, the wastage of the American loan on cigarettes and films, the complacency about increased coal output per man when what was required was an increase far beyond the capacity of the existing labour force in the coal mines.

Defeat will teach us nothing if we think of these mistakes as the causes of the fuel crisis and believe that by correcting each individually we have got to the root of the trouble. In reality the mistakes of individual Ministers are merely symptoms of a basic weakness.

Turn back to the analogy of the war. What made victory possible was a system of planning and allocation from the highest level right down to the factory at one end and the Army Corps at the other. In 1940 we were still extemporising and muddling long after Chamberlain fell. Only by the end of 1942 was the administration complete which was the real basis of victory.

To-day, in the battle for peace, we have no less than eight Ministeries concerned with Supply, all working on their own and without any central system of allocation.

Mr. Barnes very properly wants to improve the train services; Mr. Wilmot wants to get goods into the shop-windows including domestic electric appliances, Mr. Shinwell wants generating plant, but Sir Stafford Cripps controls its allocation, and, since he is responsible for the export drive, is inclined to send it abroad.

Mr. Isaacs, in charge of labour, can refer to no central authority which co-ordinates the supply of labour with that of materials. Dr. Dalton, since last June, has been chairman of the Cabinet Coal Committee in his spare time.

As for Nye Bevan, he is Socialist Lord Beaverbrook whose housing programme is succeeding because he has created his own extempore priority system and so got the better of less enterprising colleagues.

The conclusion is obvious. What we lack now is what we lacked even in 1941—a Ministry of Production, directing the Regional Production Committees, and armed with full powers to fix priorities and allocate our rare man-power and materials, despite the clamour of competing Departments and industries. Without such a Ministry, Socialism degenerates into departmental imperialism.

We sometimes forget that there was a Caretaker Government in the summer of 1945. It had time to do one thing—to destroy the whole machinery of central control of production with which we won the war. For this we have to thank Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, the Minister of Production, who wound up his Ministry before the General Election.

The Labour Government's prime mistake was its failure to reverse this decision of the Caretaker Government. It may have believed that nationalisation was an alternative to a Ministry of Production. But to substitute State for private ownership of certain sections of industry does not remove the need for a centralised system of priorities and allocation.

Inter-departmental committees of harassed Ministers are no substitute. Their ineffectiveness was proved during the war—and again in the recent fuel crisis. To win the battle for peace, harsh decisions must be taken, which no committee of pre-occupied Ministers can possibly take.

What is needed is the revival of the Ministry of Production or the creation of some equally effective central machinery.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

# A LONDON DIARY

(*News Chronicle*, February 20th, 1947)

NOTHING has so warmed me for weeks as the response of the daily Press to the announcement that the weekly journals of opinion would be included in the general ban on periodicals.

A distinction would not have been hard to make, because these journals of opinion would have been prepared to appear without any advertisements in a merely tabloid form. Their readers would have been glad to get a four- or eight-page issue. As it is, we have to put up with a break in continuity; instead we are given the chance to talk to a wider public.

In the General Strike the NEW STATESMAN managed to produce an astonishing little edition, handset, mainly by the staff, in the office of a jobbing printer. This time the National Press, with great generosity, has offered us hospitality.

* * *

I was particularly pleased when the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, the political views of which differ so strikingly from those of the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, suggested that he might publish one of our leading articles. It was a matter of real regret that this agreeable invitation had to be refused, because we could not appear in two morning dailies in the same week.

On this page the *News Chronicle* is doing us proud, presenting to its mass circulation some of our characteristic features in miniature form. The *Evening Standard* is printing articles from the editors of all the weeklies during the black-out. The editor of the *N.S. & N.* is writing a diary for *Observer's* weekly Notebook next Sunday. And the *Sunday Pictorial* is allotting us generous space on the same date.

I am not sure that anything of this kind could happen in any other country. Here is proof, if proof were needed, that the special function of the political weeklies is fully appreciated, and here is proof too that there is a fellowship of the Press, not impaired by political differences.

* * *

Here is the first verse of Lucio's apt comment on this indiscriminate ban, from the *Manchester Guardian* on February 15:—

> Down with those highbrow sheets that cherish
> The deeper draughts from wisdom's vat;
> Let *Statesman* and *Spectator* perish,
> Even as *Tit-Bits* and *Home Chat*.
> There is no dodging this fell hammer,
> Down fall our brightest and our best:
> *Peg's Paper* (merged, I find, with *Glamour*)
> Like the *Economist* goes West.

* * *

Even the Dorchester's luxurious dining room was iced by a freezing draught when I lunched there on Monday with Asaf Ali, the first Indian Ambassador to the United States. That a distinguished Indian, who has been, like his friend Jawarhalal Nehru, many years in gaol, should be appointed Ambassador to Washington is something more than a symbol.

Indians have had enough of symbols and want concrete evidence of freedom. An Indian Ambassador in Washington is to them a landmark, a proof that they are entering world affairs as a fully independent nation.

* * *

I wish the scientists would invent something useful. I wish, for instance, they would do something about the weather. If the Russians could use atomic energy to thaw the snows of Siberia, their whole attitude towards the West would change. National character is the result of climate more than any other factor.

The worst thing about the British climate is not that we get wet summers and occasional cold winters. The real trouble is that we seldom see sunshine and snow together. That is why snow makes us tired, while other nations find it invigorating.

In Switzerland or Scandinavia or North America snow means fun, and not merely fun for children, who have lots of energy to make snow-men even on the darkest and coldest day. I remember a Christmas Day in a country house in America, where I was met at the station with sledges and ponies with bells; and another in Switzerland where, as we climbed on our skis, we were so hot that we stripped to the skin and came back nearly black with the sun.

I remember best of all an endless frieze of skiers casting long shadows before them as they came at the rate of express trains over the slope down towards St. Antoine, before Hitler marched into Austria and Goering took over the ski-ing school.

In every memory it is the sun that made the snow good. I conclude that snow is perfectly foul unless there is sunshine out of doors during the day as well as central heating indoors at night. So I direct the attention of the scientists not to getting rid of the snow but to releasing the sunshine. CRITIC

# BOOKS IN GENERAL

## DON'T READ DICKENS

(*News Chronicle*, February 20th, 1947)

"DON'T read Dickens," says Mr. James Pope-Hennessey in *America is an Atmosphere* (Home and Van Thal, 8s. 6d.). He was advising a greenhorn traveller to the United States during the war; and what he meant was, Don't read Dickens's *American Notes*.

But what English writer is the traveller to the United States to read? Brilliant journalism abounds; but there has been a collapse in the literature of travel and it is a shock to realise that not a single English creative writer has given us, in our lifetime, an imaginative impression of the United States.

English books about America have been on the same unsatisfying level (as Mr. Pope-Hennessy points out) as the corresponding books about Soviet Russia.

Neither of these countries (it appears) invites or attracts the imaginative writer who is interested in private life, the writer who is bored by opinion, who is not especially concerned with this problem or that, and who wishes to be left alone to feel, to expose his sensibility to the scene and the people, and, above all, to write description.

The result is an embarrassing gap in the literature of travel and into this emptiness Mr. Pope-Hennessy drops his little book.

Modest, intimate, tentative, very wary, a shade too exquisite, it is all the same the kind of book that is most needed. It answers none of the loud questions. It explains very little.

It describes very few places—New York, Washington, Alabama and New Orleans, chiefly—and even so, only goes for corners of these places, a spring morning here, a hot day in a train there, an evening somewhere else. But it evokes a real, vivid America, the America which does not know it is being looked at.

Above all, it describes. And it is written out of love, with a detached mind but not a detached heart.

Mr. Pope-Hennessy's definition of the duty of the traveller defines his own habit:

> "What is so tantalising in a strange city is the sense that it is familiar to its own inhabitants, that a life which seems so impenetrable, so alien to the stranger is, in fact, habitual to everyone else. To probe this life as deeply as may be in the time at one's disposal seems to me a chief objective in travel; this and the readiness to be impressed by the apparently irrelevant."

The last above all. It was irrelevant to notice what kind of people visit the Lincoln Memorial, and why; it was irrelevant to describe his landlady's practice of astrology; it was irrelevant to draw the portrait of Catherine and Ted, the much-married couple who couldn't keep still or silent a minute of the day; it was irrelevant to watch the dress show in Montgomery or to pick out the life of a girl in the Pentagon typing pool.

But all these irrelevances point his sketches and his judgments.

The boring wastes of the Mississippi come to life because an old man is leaning on a wall there; and those tedious American railway journeys become important as they reveal to him the frightening loneliness of the American scene, where hostile and primeval nature is only a mile or so away, for all the hot-dog stalls and the chicken inns.

In a way this is too slight a book, too prim and exclusive in its interests to carry us very far; but despite the deplorably precious title it is an excellent beginning and the work, at last, of a warm and meditative traveller.

V. S. PRITCHETT

# THE FOREIGN LABOUR RED HERRING

(*Sunday Pictorial*, February 23rd, 1947)

MORE pairs of hands and more machines. There, in seven words, is the key to the solution of the economic crisis which threatens our standard of living and our ability to maintain full employment a year hence, when we can no longer pay for imports of food and raw materials with dollars.

Not that these islands are underpopulated. On the contrary, we should be happier and better off if we had fewer people to feed and house. The trouble is that our population contains a growing proportion of old people, and that we have not adjusted ourselves to the fact that we are no longer a rich, creditor country able to draw on overseas investments.

We are still "carrying" a big leisured class. We have still got huge numbers unproductively employed in luxury trades and services, and in running sport, betting and entertainment. Only about a third of our occupied population is engaged in actually making things to eat and sell; and that is too few for our needs.

In time, the answers can doubtless be found in mechanisation. By American standards, the equipment of our coal mines and a great part of our industry is obsolete. But re-tooling, like the building of Rome, is not a one-day job. The immediate need is to have at least 100,000 more men and women in productive work. That is the outstanding conclusion of the Government's new White Paper.

How is this extra labour force to be secured? Across this issue, which we should all try to approach sensibly, without personal prejudice or dog-in-the-manger outlook, the Tories have drawn a partisan red herring. The royal road, they argue, to our national recovery is to import at once immense numbers—anything up to half a million—of foreign workers.

This sort of talk is largely a political stunt. Its purpose is to drive a wedge between the T.U.C. and the Government, and to create among the "white-collared" class—the "floating vote," which Tory headquarters hopes to recapture—the impression that organised labour is selfishly obstructing British prosperity.

Obviously, as things stand, we need suitable foreign workers if we can get them. We are desperately short of labour on the land, in the coal mines, in iron foundries and textiles. No valid objection can be raised by the trade unions to the selective recruitment of foreign workers possessing the necessary manual skills and capable of assimilation.

But the number of such recruits is limited. Apart from language difficulties and the practical question how foreigners are to get dwellings in the present housing shortage, the hard fact has to be faced that the pool of 700,000 Displaced Persons in Europe contains relatively small numbers of skilled manual workers.

We cannot afford to import elderly people or those with a large number of unemployable dependants; nor do we want those whose notion of a career is either to join the ranks of black marketeers or to form a foreign legion under the British flag for a war against the Soviet Union.

In short, to import foreign workers offers no short-cut to a solution of the man-power problem. It is doubtful if we can find 50,000 suitable skilled immigrants in the next two years.

About their entry, under adequate guarantees to the British trade unions concerned, there should be no political fuss. So many extra pairs of hands would be a help and need hurt nobody. But we can do much more to meet our needs quickly by attracting more women back to industry—which means giving them "the pay for the job"—and by raising wages in industries where man-power is short.

Above all, importing foreigners is no substitute for reducing the proportion of our man-power which is wastefully employed—particularly those 1,600,000 men and women whom the Government, according to the White Paper on Defence issued ten days ago, proposes to retain in the Armed Services and in munitions during the next eighteen months.

"The fruits of seven years of intense war effort should not be thrown away by an ill-considered jettisoning of Defence responsibilities." On this proposition the Government bases its case for maintaining this host of "unemployed in uniform." We cannot afford it.

We cannot afford to keep up the pretence that we are a Great Power, committed to defending the Middle East and the Seven Seas against all comers, while shortage of civilian labour at home threatens us with still lower rations and insufficient materials to keep factory wheels turning. Talk of Britain's imperial destiny, when our economic resources—the only basis of our national strength—are lacking, makes nonsense.

Caviare for the Generals, and no bread for anyone else, is a policy of national insanity.

AYLMER VALLANCE

# A DATE FOR INDIA—WHY NOT FOR PALESTINE?

(*Sunday Pictorial, February 23rd, 1947*)

THERE seems to be an idea that, by referring it to Uno, the Cabinet has settled the Palestine problem. But has it?

Mr. Bevin will have to wait till the Assembly meets next September before he can raise the matter. The Assembly is bound to refer it to a Committee. The Committee will appoint a Commission of Inquiry. The Commission, after long investigations, will report back to the Committee. The Committee will make recommendations to the Assembly and, since no nation is likely to want such a nasty job, it is quite likely that, in one or two years' time, the Assembly will hand it back to Britain.

Meanwhile, our soldiers and officials will have to go on keeping "law and order" in a country where every inhabitant—Jew and Arab—wants to be rid of us.

There are only two ways of settling the Palestine problem, an Arab way and a Jewish way. The Jewish way was recommended by the Royal Commission in 1937. It proposed that a Jewish Commonwealth should be created in a part of Palestine where Jews could freely immigrate. The rest of the country should become an independent Arab State.

The Arab way was first tried by Neville Chamberlain. He turned down the Royal Commission, and in the White Paper of 1939 he promised that Palestine should become an independent Arab State with the power to stop all Jewish immigration. This White Paper was condemned as illegal by the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, but remained in force all through the war.

On this issue the Government has been wobbling for eighteen months. To stop the Arabs from flirting with Russia, it has been using a large British Army and a large part of the Navy to enforce the White Paper on the Jews. This cost us over £40 million last year.

But Labour Ministers cannot forget that, before the election, they solemnly promised to repeal the White Paper and permit free Jewish immigration. So, to save their conscience, a trickle of 1,500 Jewish immigrants per month has been permitted. This is large enough to disturb the Arabs and small enough to infuriate the Jews.

The situation gets worse with every month of delay. British indecision has played into the hands of the Arab extremists under the Mufti and of the Jewish terrorists. It has made them so strong that they are now able to terrorise their own peoples and to keep the British officials in Palestine locked up behind barbed wire.

This is intolerable. Mr. Bevin should tell us at once what policy he is going to enforce in the period before Uno makes up its mind. Even more important, he should state that, whatever Uno decides, British officials, policemen and troops will anyway be withdrawn *by a definite date*.

That is exactly what Mr. Attlee has said to the Hindus and Moslems of India. To prevent any more stalling, he has bluntly told them that, whether they can agree or not, Britain cannot afford to hold the ring indefinitely and will be out of India by June of next year.

Mr. Bevin should apply the same principles in Palestine. In fairness to the Jews, the Arabs and ourselves he should (1) decide, (2) act, and (3) get out.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

# THE LESSON OF THE BLIZZARD

(*Sunday Pictorial*, February 23rd, 1947)

SOME day the blizzard will end. As long as bitter cold makes shopping a misery and staying at home worse; as long as snow blocks roads and railways, and gales imperil the lives of seamen who bring the coal to power stations, so long shall we remain conscious of a challenge and so long will miners, transport workers, soldiers and common people everywhere respond to it. They leave the grousing to a few people who have no experience of discomfort. As long as the danger is clear, we shall none of us spare any effort to meet it.

But that is not all. Spring and summer sunshine (if we get any) and a lazy August may be as dangerous as this cruel winter. For we shall still face an economic blizzard. We don't blame the Government for the crisis itself: it cannot help the weather, and a serious coal shortage was inevitable. We criticise it for not fully preparing us, not having "operations" worked out, and not giving us more warning and encouragement. The next blizzard we have to face will be when the dollars run out and the American Loan comes to an end. The country cannot always live on loans, any more than individuals can always live "on tick."

We are not asking the Government to preach to us about producing more; we know we must do that. We need to understand its plans and to be told its targets—in much greater detail than we find in the new White Paper. We know, if we think about it, that we shall have to put up with more austerity and work harder. We shall be able to do that if we have leadership; if there is a plan we understand and believe in.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

# NATION SPEAKING TO NATION

(*Sunday Pictorial, February 23rd, 1947*)

THE House of Commons was in one of its unbuttoned moods on Tuesday when it discussed the B.B.C. It grumbled wittily over the suppression of the Third Programme, and in a broad Scottish accent it castigated the humour of the Light Programme. From both sides of the House came the demand for a bolder tone in controversy and for more of it.

The curious thing is that, while the Home Service plays in all political questions for safety, broadcasts to foreign countries and the Dominions are much less timid. To these, it seems, the diehard critics do not listen. When it dares to follow its own judgment the B.B.C. does not lack enterprise.

The plea we would make is for more imagination in the handling of controversies that divide us from other peoples. It is a commonplace that the air now links us with the remotest regions of the earth. But how often do we hear their voice?

We can listen, if we are linguists equipped with a good set, to the public opinion of Timbuctoo. But while India is staggering from crisis to crisis, it never occurs to the B.B.C. to offer us a frank talk by Jawaharlal Nehru or Mr. Jinnah.

Over the rights and wrongs of the Jewish question we have been at issue with America for a year. Here is a subject for debate which calls for frank talks from several angles. The official British case is fully presented. But if ours is a democracy that lives by free discussion, is it not our duty to listen to Dr. Weizmann, to the Arab leader, Jamal Husseini, and to an American spokesman also?

Throughout these months of tension with Russia, how much have the best-informed among us been able to glean of Moscow's case? It has been put, of course, to the Assembly of the United Nations. But in this century of the common man is that enough?

The ideal plan would be that from time to time a spokesman chosen by the Soviet Government should state the Russian case, as persuasively as he can, in the Home Service. The British reply, courteous but frank, should come next day. Both broadcasts should then be repeated, in Russian, from Moscow. That is the way to break down the "iron curtain."

One day, it may be, Unesco will organise an international forum of this kind. Until it has the means to attempt it, the duty falls on the B.B.C. to play the pioneer. When nations learn to debate honestly and with good temper over the air, we shall have turned our backs finally upon war.

H. N. BRAILSFORD

# A LONDON NOTEBOOK

(*Observer*, February 23rd, 1947)

ONE of the remarkable things about the crisis is the speed with which coal has been moved to the generating plants after the closedown. The only real danger—the breakdown of the grid—was averted within a few days, once the decision had been taken to give coal the top transport priority.

This leads me to a very curious conclusion—that if this top priority had been given in January, before the blizzard, Mr. Shinwell's announcement on Black Friday might have been avoided. In that case the Minister of Fuel and Power now shares with the Minister of Food a personal unpopularity which is quite unmerited. Both of them must take the kick for misfortunes which are either unavoidable or a Cabinet responsibility.

Mr. Shinwell, for instance, must have been urging all through December and January that Mr. Barnes should do what he finally did do—clear the railways for the coal trains. Quite naturally the Minister of Transport would be unwilling to enforce such a serious dislocation both to his new passenger services and to the export trade.

Who took the decision between the two departmental Ministers? It must have been Hugh Dalton, Chairman of the Coal Committee. If this is so, it explains what seemed a mystery at the time, why the Chancellor of the Exchequer wound up the fuel debate and gave the assurance that the Government would not permit this crisis to happen again.

The Labour movement, which is very sensitive to this sort of thing, has been quick to assert its confidence in Mr. Shinwell, and I am told that the Prime Minister's tribute to his colleague at Manchester was greeted with a storm of applause. But I am afraid that the man in the street—and the woman in the home—will not easily forgive him for his optimistic statements last October. When things go wrong on the home front we all turn and rend the official spokesman just as we abused not the Generals but the unfortunate Cairo spokesman during the African defeat.

* * *

I have in front of me a letter from a deserter living, as he says, willy-nilly, a near-criminal life with other deserters. He writes that they are "quite serious men whose peculiarity is that they detest Service life to an unnatural degree." To such men

"any offer or bribe is useless, firstly because it will not be believed, and secondly because any other state of existence, including civil prison, is considered by us to be superior to Service life. What is to be done, then? Has it escaped everyone's notice that the mines are short of men? Mr. Shinwell could use the greater part of 10,000 men. That seems an obvious conclusion to me and one which I would accept and most of my acquaintances would accept also. It would permit us to keep our wives and children instead of permitting them to starve while we go to prison. Give us one year down the mines and I will wager my valuable freedom that 50 per cent of the deserters respond. To ask of us that we naively place our heads in the lion's mouth, or lay bare our breasts to the revenge of outraged military authorities, is simply silly."

* * *

There was never any doubt when General Aung San came here to negotiate a settlement for Burma that he was a national hero. Meeting him here, however, I could not tell whether he would be as effective a negotiator as he had been a guerrilla leader, and I have since wondered whether personal division and political rivalries in Burma would prevent a successful settlement. The latest news makes me very hopeful.

General Aung San has shown remarkably statesmanlike qualities, and the opposition of the Communists, who are split in Burma, and of politicians like U. Saw, who has resigned from the Executive Council, seems unlikely to be powerful. U. Saw was the Burmese Premier who came to England in 1941, only to be snubbed by Mr. Churchill when he asked for some promise of Burmese independence after the war. He represents rather the elder type of Burmese politician and most of the younger Burmese seem to be behind Aung San.

The best omen for a peaceful solution in Burma is that Aung San showed real wisdom in handling the problem of the Hill Peoples. Here Mr. Attlee, who played an active part all through the discussions, must have his full share of credit. The agreement envisaged federal autonomy for some at least of the Hill Peoples within a unified Burma; the details have to be decided on the spot. The appointment of Colonel Rees-Williams, M.P., to be Chairman of this conference is admirable. He has 25 years' experience in Burma, and I am divulging nothing that need be secret when I say that he was the independent choice for this post of General Aung San, the Hill Peoples and the Burmese Government.

* * *

A friend recently in Holland was surprised to be greeted almost everywhere he went by young people who had recently been to England. This was the happy effect of the work of the Reception Committee, Y.P.O.C. (Young People from Occupied Countries), which was founded in 1942 to relieve extreme distress of children in occupied countries, and which since the war has given British holidays to 9,000 Dutch children, 660 French, 400 Czech.

In many cases these children had something more than a holiday here; they stayed long enough in English homes to form real and lasting friendships. The committee has thousands more children who want to come, and there are suggestions that British children should pay similar visits to the Continent. I am sorry to hear that the committee's work is now held up

for lack of funds, for this is really one of the few constructive things that has been done in Europe since the war. We talk a lot about "friendship between peoples." As long as we have sovereign states, friendship is only a pleasant word for agreements based on self-interest. But if children all across Europe get to like each other, we may really have started something solid.

* * *

We shall all have an outburst of good temper when the snow melts and we again see the winter aconites. (They were already showing yellow through the ground when the frost came in mid-January.) Some people will even forget they were angry; almost certainly they will forget their own superb inconsistency in being angry first with Mr. Strachey about bread rationing, and then with Mr. Shinwell because he didn't ration their fuel drastically enough.

I am not sure how many will remember that their real complaint is that they have been given too many electric stoves, too many comfortable trains and too many luxuries of all kinds. But it will be interesting to see, when the weather breaks, how far the present grousing is merely reaction from discomfort, and how far—for that is the only alternative—it is really a demand for greater austerity.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

## BELEAGUERED ISLAND

(*Evening Standard*, February 25th, 1947)

THE facts in the White Paper are not Socialist facts or Conservative facts. They are just facts about the position of a small island which became a great creditor empire, but which is now resuming a position more natural to a small island.

The process of adjustment is hard, and it has been left very late. Even he who runs may read the White Paper. But it is probably better to sit down and think it over.

As the Chancellor of the Exchequer has remarked, we have been used to "living on tick." The overseas investments which enabled us to live on foreign labour were largely used up in the war, our machinery and equipment are out of date, we have a monstrous job of reconstruction to do, we need almost everything, we produce too little per head and our man and woman-power is far too small.

The position has been disguised first by Lend-Lease and then by the American Loan since. We have to export more than we can in order to buy the food and raw materials we need. When the loan runs out we shall be in a state of siege. We are discovering the basic reality that in the long run work is the source of wealth.

As an "appreciation," to use a military term, the White Paper is excellent. As a directive of operations, it is quite inadequate. Ministers have to make extremely unpleasant decisions.

Part of the trouble is that the Caretaker Government got rid of the Ministry of Production, whose job it would be to decide what priorities to give to the various demands of department Ministers for food and fuel, the Services and the export trade, transport and education.

What have we got to do? We can't escape more "austerity," because we must increase our exports. The Government target for this year of 140 per cent over 1938 is very optimistic, but it is all to the good to set ourselves difficult targets.

Then we have got to transfer trade as far as possible from dollar to "soft currency" countries.

We must integrate ourselves economically with Western Europe; try to reach a trade bargain with Russia and extend as fast as possible colonial development schemes on the lines of the East African project for ground nuts, which is to bring us a useful supply of margarine in 1948.

We must develop on these lines even if it means that we cannot maintain the ridiculously onerous terms of the American Loan.

We need more workers and more machines. We must increase the production of our land and, above all, of our coal.

Our island is built on coal. If we can produce a few more million tons a year we shall turn the corner. But it will take time to open the thousand pits that private enterprise closed between the two wars, and then to obtain and install machinery.

Meanwhile, for 1947 the Government hopes to get another 100,000 workers, 35,000 of whom will be miners. For this it relies on appealing to women to return to industry, on setting the Poles in this country to work and on importing foreign labour.

I should like to add the suggestion, made in a letter to me from a deserter, that some thousands of deserters who will never surrender to the military authorities might give themselves up if they are offered work in the mines instead of Army punishment.

The White Paper does not say how many foreign workers it hopes to obtain. It does not indulge in the wishful thinking of some, who have assumed that our problems would be solved if only the trade unions would allow us to import hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

The number is limited not only by the difficulty of persuading workers that this is a crisis of underproduction, and not of over-production as in 1931. There are also the problems of housing and absorbing workers who do not speak our language and who are often without the required skills. Perhaps we may absorb 50,000.

Surely we have another big reserve of wasted manpower. Why must we accept the Government assumption that Britain must maintain more than a million men in the armed services?

In reducing our commitments in the Far East we are not "scuttling," but passing over, in countries which we cannot any longer hold by force even if we wished to, the responsibilities of government to those who have an interest in maintaining friendship and trade with us.

But we still have far too many men and spend far more than we can afford in the Middle East. Mr. Bevin presumably argues that he must have a great army to support his diplomacy. This is a Foreign Office hangover. It is our industrial resources that give us strength and influence; we cannot defend this island without coal or feed ourselves without men. We are wasting our greatest asset by keeping hundreds of thousands of men away from their homes and their livelihood in unhappy exile among Arab sand-dunes.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

## WHAT SORT OF ENGLAND

(*News Chronicle*, February 27th, 1947)

CRITICS of the White Paper (apart from some bilious mortals who make it an excuse for mere gloom) agree that it is an analysis rather than a call for action, a forecast rather than a plan. It explains in frank terms the dangerous position of this island and suggests ways of improving it in 1947. It does not tell us in any compelling way what the Government programme is or how its suggestions will be carried out.

It begins with a thoughtful homily on planning, but it looks no further ahead than the ten months in front of us. This is far too short a period for any plan.

The difficulties of planning in a democracy, in which direction of labour is ruled out and only a small part of industry is nationalised, are obvious enough. Further, any British plan must be very elastic, if only because Britain depends on alliances and lives on exports and imports. This must to some degree remain our position until we get the One World, or, at least, the world-control of essential materials which we all know is necessary. We cannot plan as a self-sufficient Soviet Union or U.S.A. can plan. We are open to the frolic winds of world trade.

This makes a decision about the kind of England we are trying to build absolutely imperative. Are we trying to remain a great world Empire? Are we content to be a satellite of America, adopting both at home and abroad only those policies which the Republican Party approves and which it is ready to subsidise with future loans? Or are we prepared to regard ourselves primarily as part of Europe? In that case we must integrate our economy far more closely, through France, with Europe and Africa, and work for a unified Europe which is neither anti-America nor anti-Soviet.

Once these questions are asked, it becomes at once clear why there is no plan in the White Paper. For the first condition of any national plan, even of the most flexible type, is that it should present a general picture of what the nation is hoping to be. On that basis it would name the priorities of action.

It is agreed that we have to bridge the big gap between requirements and resources, cut our coat and enlarge our cloth, increase our labour force and work harder to produce more and export more.

We are told we must maintain austerity and increase our exports for four main purposes.

(1) To maintain for the next 18 months armed forces more than double their pre-war strength;

(2) Pursue, with undiminished fervour, our search for social betterment—more houses, more teachers and improved schools;

(3) Standards of personal consumption—including apparently undiminished enjoyment of tobacco and Hollywood films—sufficient to keep up the national pecker;

(4) Capital investment on a scale needed to make good the immense wartime arrears of maintenance and to offset shortage of labour by better machinery and the replacement of much obsolete plant.

These objectives are competitors for our limited resources. We shall fail to attain any of them if we pursue all of them with equal intensity at one and the same time. What is their order of importance?

The answer will depend on the sort of England we are trying to build. The White Paper puts (1) first and neglects (4). It assumes that military commitments cannot be further cut and leaves capital investment a bad fourth.

For Socialists the order of priority should be (4), (2), (3), (1). At all costs we must lay the foundations of more up-to-date industry and better agriculture, and we cannot afford to whittle down essential programmes aimed at making us a healthier, better-educated, and hence more efficient, country. Jam must take third place; but it must come before guns.

## MR. BEVIN AND MR. TRUMAN

(*News Chronicle*, February 27th, 1947)

ERNEST BEVIN used the occasion of the Palestine Debate to slosh President Truman in a way which should placate the most fervent critics of his pro-American policy. He has certainly never been as tough to Molotov or Stalin—in public. It was the President, he suggested, who had prevented him from achieving that settlement of the Jewish problem, on which he had staked his personal career in November, 1945.

The American Administration is certainly vulnerable on this issue. It has been running a pro-Arab policy in the Middle East, where Standard Oil is master, and a pro-Jewish policy at home, where two million Jews can decide the election results in New York State.

During his fatal interview with Ibn Saud in 1943, Roosevelt tried to interest the King in American agricultural methods and mentioned arboriculture, "I do not like trees," replied Ibn Saud. "They provide cover for enemy forces." And, pressing home his advantage, he extracted from the President a statement that he had never approved of Jewish settlement in Palestine and would consult the Arab League before supporting any change of Palestine policy. The official record of this conversation is in the Saudi-Arabian Foreign Office and in the State Department. Next day Roosevelt flew back to Washington and assured the American Zionists that his conversations with Ibn Saud had not altered his attitude to Zionism.

I shall never forget the occasion when one of my American colleagues on the Committee of Inquiry was first confronted with these facts. "Whatever the President may do," he shouted, "he is not going to make me into a duplicitous sonofabitch." But, as every Englishman knows by bitter experience of the First World War, contradictory pledges to Jews and Arabs cannot be conjured away by strong language.

America has a commercial and a strategic interest in the Middle East. Strategically, she desires to deny this area to Russia and deter Russian aggression by keeping a rocket gun pointed at Baku. Commercially she wishes to exploit her oil concessions in Saudi-Arabia, the richest oil reserves in the world. By using these in peacetime, she hopes to conserve her dwindling domestic supplies for "an emergency."

Standard Oil can rely on the active support of the Chiefs of Staff in pleading that the President's assistance to the Jews should be confined to pledges. But the Jews are powerful enough to prevent him from openly supporting a pro-Arab policy in Palestine. So despite Mr. Bevin, he sits tightly on the fence—in the sturdy conviction that it is sound American policy to let Britain handle Palestine, and take the kicks.

Having failed either to get American assistance or to cajole the Jews into accepting the position of a permanent minority in an Arab State, Mr. Bevin is putting the dispute to U.N.O. On Tuesday the House welcomed this step which, as Oliver Stanley pointed out, should have been taken last October. Delay has wasted a whole year during which our officials and soldiers will have to continue to keep law and order without a policy.

But reference to U.N.O. merely transfers the intrigues and double-dealings to New York. There Russia will probably support the Arab protest against the "British police State." America, according to form, may be expected to do everything to avoid responsibility and keep Britain where she wants her.